2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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A more difficult question is the effect of the Taro cult on life and manners. This is naturally somewhat complex. We have seen that the ostensible purpose of the cult is to promote the fertility of the gardens. In reality the rites which are most directly aimed at this result seem on the whole useless, and in one or two cases destructive. However, it is likely that the gardens do receive some benefit from the cult simply by the increased interest with which it has invested them, and that this indirect benefit outweighs many times the small amount of harm done by such a ceremony as that of medicining the taro (pp. 42, 43).

Those who travel in the Northern Division cannot fail to be impressed by the frequency of Taro feasts and functions. It would be wrong, however, to regard these as mere waste of time, as if the cult were making greater idlers than ever of the natives. It is in fact providing them with a new interest to which they devote much of the time that would otherwise be spent less pleasurably and probably less profitably.

It is perhaps on law and organization that the Taro cult has the most significant effect, albeit a rudimentary and indefinite one. The voluntary acceptance of a new ritual, however lax, the observance of taboos, the necessity for probation, are all influences making for law and law-abidingness. More significant still is the elementary hierarchy which we have observed among the Taro men (p. 32). The existence of leaders in one tribe who are recognized by distant votaries of the cult in another tribe stands perhaps for a new idea among the Orokaiva. The absence of any political cohesion among and within the peoples of Papua has been remarked by others. It is conceivable that such a movement as Taro might give the initial impetus to some more or less spontaneous political organization.

The emergence of strong personalities who attain to an eminent position in the cult may give promise of a more advanced kind of chieftainship than the very primitive

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patriarchate which has been the Orokaiva fashion. While, however, we may welcome these signs of an incipient chieftainship in the power and influence of the Taro men, we cannot deny that they are to some extent—how far I have been unable to decide—founded upon the obnoxious practice of sorcery. Incidentally the theory of possession and the double role of priest and magician which the Taro man is called upon to play may give some colour to the theory that the functions of magician, priest, and chieftain were originally combined.

We have already noted the mutual amity which prevails among all branches of the cult, and have discovered cause to suspect that it is based on the fear of sorcery (p. 47). This general amity or fraternity, however, whatever its basis may be, is not only a striking, but on the whole a commendable feature of the cult. Clashes of arms—part in fun, part in earnest—are still common enough among the clans of the north; the warlike display at the welcome of visitors which sometimes leads to these affrays is in fact a regular custom. But although the Taro parties are constantly engaged in travel and visiting, I know of no serious quarrel between rival parties *qua* Taro parties. It is not necessary to observe that, but for the previous pacification of the Division, the Taro cult could never have spread itself so widely in so short a time. But it is still true that the cult is consolidating the work to which it was in the first place indebted. In fine, by arousing this elementary tendency toward cohesion, by establishing the intertribal power of a few individuals, and by advancing the spirit of intertribal friendliness, the Taro cult has played its part in emphasizing the unity of the Orokaiva. No movement of native origin has, since European occupation, made the same universal appeal to all the clans and tribes of this people.

We may briefly consider the effect of the Taro cult on Orokaiva art. This art, comparatively ill-developed on the decorative side, has attained to a high degree of perfection in the conduct of certain ceremonies. The

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scattered, occupying several villages or parts of several villages. In this case the clan will in all probability retain a nominal ownership of all its lands; but in practice it is customary for the various sections to assume by general consent or else by the allocation of a headman, the occupation and usage of particular parts of the land. In due time the section is likely to adopt a distinctive name, and to develop into an independent clan: the right of usage tacitly becomes ownership, and we find the normal condition restored, viz. the clan locally unified and in possession of its own tracts of land. A system exactly similar governs the ownership of the small waterways (useful for fishing) and of the sago swamps.

The Orokaiva clan is virtually a patriarchal group; there is no real chieftainship, but a recognized ascendancy of the old man, provided his vigour of mind and body is equal to his position. As it begins to fail his place is gradually occupied by a younger man. Only in the larger clans, where there are well-defined family groups, does the question of hereditary succession appear, and then it is a somewhat faint appearance.

It is sometimes said that the chief owns the land, though this is hardly more than a form of speech. He does something, however, towards administering it. For instance, he can say which area is to be laid under cultivation at any time, and he can subdivide and allot the territory of the clan among its branches. He feels himself and is felt to be the guardian of the land. Thus we hear an old man telling how his father had given him death-bed injunctions —'Friday he talk, Saturday he die,' as the interpreter put it in order to make clear the testamentary nature of the charge—to allow all his own people to make their gardens on the clan's territory, but to suffer no strangers.

Among the members of the clan there is a very considerable amount of personal freedom, and, except in so far as there may be an allocation of land and fishing rights between branches or families, they may in theory make their gardens where they please. There is occasional

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

headdresses. At the conclusion of the initiation, some of the initiates are presented with the *otohu* ornaments. (Formerly, it was always a distinguished warrior who presented these.) The initiates then fast for a day and a night. That night, there is sexual licence for the senior villagers, a temporary lifting of tabus on incest and adultery, but the initiates themselves are not permitted to participate.

In interpreting the initiation ceremonies of the Orokaiva, Chinnery and Beaver state that " the idea . . . seems to be to instil absolute and lasting terror into the candidates, and to make them think that their elders have beaten off the spirits; while in this receptive and chastened frame of mind, the lads, imbued with the idea of the power of the men, will pay attention to the instruction given. There appears to be an idea that the spirits of the dead are present, and that the initiated, *i.e.* the living, are keeping them away from the candidates."[6]

Amongst the living, the initiation ritual juxtaposes the two groups, initiated and uninitiated, the one group terrified and utterly helpless, and the other well able to deal with the *embahi* spirits and drive away danger. Thus the respect for seniority, which is informally learned during childhood, is finally established.

An Erikson-type psychoanalytic interpretation would doubtless find in the *embahi's* threat to devour the boys, with the menacing reiteration " Bite, bite, bite! " a dramatization of the *meni orosati's* guilt at biting the mother. I have not enough data to confirm or deny the admissibility of such an interpretation.

Above all, initiation involves the explicit instruction of the boys in the *otohu* virtues. This instruction takes place during their period of seclusion in the *oro*. Later, when *otohu* ornaments are given to some of them, they are again exhorted in detail to practise these virtues. The possession of an *otohu* imposes a social obligation on the wearer to " live up to it," and the prestige associated with this ornament indubitably ensures that a large number of people do in fact approximate to the ideal *otohu* patterns of behaviour.

(3) Sanctions

In Orokaiva society, sanctions operate diffusely and need no specific person's direction to put them into effect. The *embo kiti*, whom F. E. Williams called a " clan headman," but who is really more of a village headman whose position is hereditary within a certain lineage of the clan, has a limited authority which is backed by no sanctions. He has no power to reward or punish, except by making obvious his approval or disapproval of various lines of action. In fact, there is no rewarding and punishing authority at all.

Retaliation seems to have been the commonest sanction in former times, in the form of direct violence or the more subtle method of sorcery.[7] Retaliation by sorcery may still be practised; I have no information on this point. Certainly deaths are still attributed to sorcery. When (during 1950) several people from the same village

[6] E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver, in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XLV, 1915.

[7] F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, pp. 327–329.